

RUSSIA AND THE WEST IN IRAN

accumulate in its reservoirs and likewise in its canals. *Then* only will Persia be in a position to fulfill the mission which history and nature assigned to her. The best friend of the Persian people is proletarian Russia, the Russia of Bolshevism. . . . Revolutionary Russia is the sincere and disinterested inspiration of Persia, a precious counselor, a guide worthy of confidence to orient her toward democracy.

Our policy with regard to Persia must be simply a revolutionary democratic policy. Hence, our interests coincide precisely with those of the Persian people. The purification of the natural basin of Asia is as important to the Persians as to the Russians. If Persia is the door through which one has to go in order to invade the citadel of the Revolution of the Orient, that is to say India, we must foment the Persian revolution. . . . The Persian uprising will be the signal for a series of revolutions that will spread through all of Asia and part of Africa.

A political situation favorable to democracy in Persia has an extraordinary importance for the emancipation of the entire Orient. A propitious terrain for the outbreak of the revolution has long been prepared. The imperialists of England, Russia, France, and Germany have labored there. *//// that is needed is an impulse from the outside, an external aid, an initiative, and a resolute decision. This impulse, this initiative, this initiative, can come from the Russian revolutionaries through the intermediary of the Russian Moslems.*

India is our principal objective. Persia is the only path open to India. The Persian revolution is the key to the revolution of all of the Orient, just as Egypt and the Suez Canal are the key to the British domination of the Orient. Persia is the Suez Canal of the revolution. If we shift the political center of gravity of the revolutionary movement to Persia, the Suez Canal loses its strategic value and importance. . . . *For the success of the oriental revolution Persia is the first nation that must be conquered by the*

Soviets. This precious-key to the uprising of the Orient must be in the hands of Bolshevism, cost what it may. . . . Persia must be ours; Persia must belong to the revolution.²

Conquest of Iran was thus the key to the Communist success in the Orient. There was no gap in the logic of Trotsky's argument. In its own strange way it reminds one of the alleged testament of Peter the Great, which was reported to read as follows:

² Italics mine. Quoted by Aurelio Palmieri, *La politica asiatica del Bolscevichi* (Bologna, 1924), pp. 173 ff.